

# Patel fighting to show he’s fit for role

The FBI director has struggled, and top officials question his future at the bureau.

By MICHAEL WILNER

WASHINGTON — Of all the investigations underway by the FBI, the case of Charlie Kirk’s killing is one that President Trump’s allies expect the bureau to get right. Yet its director, Kash Patel, has struggled out of the gate. He posted misleading updates of the manhunt for a suspect on social media, blaming “the heat of the moment” in testimony before a Senate panel on Tuesday. He failed to coordinate his messaging internally with Justice Department leadership. Instead of returning to headquarters, Patel dined at an exclusive restaurant in New York as the search unfolded. And after a suspect was apprehended, Patel joined Fox News to share unprecedented details. It was a series of missteps viewed in law enforcement circles as rookie errors, reflective of a director in over his head.

Trump has publicly stood by Patel in recent days. But leading voices in the MAGA movement have wondered aloud whether it is time for Patel to be removed, and top officials at the White House and Justice Department are reportedly questioning his future at the bureau. The president has also installed another loyalist in a top deputy position at FBI headquarters, raising questions over his plans. The renewed spotlight on Patel comes amid suspicion in right-wing circles the director is suppressing the release of files from the investigation of Jeffrey Epstein, a notorious sex offender. And last week, former bureau officials filed a lawsuit against the administration accusing the White House of exerting extraordinary political influence over the FBI, issuing loyalty tests for agents to determine their support for Trump.

[See Patel, A14]



MICHAEL OWEN BAKER For The Times

DOS PUEBLOS players stretch on artificial turf before a flag football game held at Oxnard High School.

# Turf not as ‘green’ as it looks

Fields of plastic, or fake turf, are spreading across the Golden State from San Diego to Del Norte counties. Some municipalities and school districts embrace them, saying they are good for the environment and promote kids’ activity and health. But some cities, including Los Angeles, are considering banning the fields — citing concerns about children’s health and the environment. Nowhere in the country is turf use growing faster than in California — on school athletic fields, in city parks and on residential lawns. Exact numbers are not known, but it’s estimated that 1,100 acres of the material, or the equivalent of some 870 football fields, are being installed across the state

Californians say they want less plastic, but the state is covered in synthetic carpets

By SUSANNE RUST

each year. In 2025, the Laguna Beach Unified School District and the San Mateo County Office of Education both received environmental accolades from the state Department of Education for, among other efforts, installing artificial turf. “The fields do not require water, pesticides or fertilizers. They also provide year-round playing time without the need for closures for regrowth or rain damage,” said Laura Chalkley, director of communications for San Mateo Union High School District. But a growing number of health experts, environmentalists and parents say the fields are harming children’s

[See Turf, A11]

# U.S. citizenship test to get tougher

As in previous term, Trump moves to make it more difficult to become naturalized.

By KEVIN RECTOR

The Trump administration moved again Wednesday to make it harder to gain U.S. citizenship, announcing a slate of changes to the core civics test that immigrants must pass to be naturalized. The changes would expand the number of questions immigrants need to be prepared to answer and increase the number of questions they must answer correctly in order to pass. The changes, announced



GARY CORONADO For The Times

CALEB Martinez with his mother, Alma, after her naturalization ceremony Wednesday in Riverside.

as pending in the Federal Register, would largely revert the test to a similarly longer and harder version that was introduced in 2020 during President Trump’s first term but was swiftly rolled back under President Biden in 2021. The shift follows other Trump administration changes to the process by which U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials determine whether prospective citizens are qualified, including enhanced assessments of their “moral character” and whether they ascribe to any “anti-American” beliefs, and intense checks into their community ties and social media networks. It also comes amid a

[See Citizenship, A6]



DAVID RUSSELL Disney via Getty Images

JIMMY KIMMEL said that Charlie Kirk’s alleged shooter might be pro-Trump.

# ABC pulls Kimmel’s show

Network announces indefinite pause after Kirk remarks

By STEPHEN BATTAGLIO

Walt Disney Co.-owned broadcaster ABC said it is pulling “Jimmy Kimmel Live” indefinitely following sharp backlash over the host’s remarks about slain right-wing activist Charlie Kirk. The move comes after station owner Nexstar Media Group said it would yank the show from its ABC affiliate stations as a result of the comments.

The Irving, Texas-based Nexstar announced Wednesday that Kimmel will be off its stations for the foreseeable future. “Nexstar strongly objects to recent comments made by Mr. Kimmel concerning the killing of Charlie Kirk and will replace the show with other programming in its ABC-affiliated markets,” a company representative said in a statement. Kimmel said during a monologue on his Monday program that Tyler Rob-

inson, the Utah man accused in the shooting death of Kirk, might have been a pro-Trump Republican. He said MAGA supporters “are desperately trying to characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them and doing everything they can to score political points from it.” Kimmel then mocked President Trump for talking about the construction of a new White House ballroom

[See Kimmel, A10]

# Protester cleared of assault charge

Acquittal may bode ill for U.S. prosecutor pursuing cases tied to immigration clashes.

By BRITTNY MEJIA AND JAMES QUEALLY

A protester was acquitted Wednesday of charges that he assaulted a federal agent during widespread protests against immigration crackdowns in Los Angeles, just hours after one of the faces of President Trump’s enforcement policies took the stand to testify against him. U.S. Border Patrol Sector Chief Gregory Bovino — the brash agent who led a phalanx of military personnel into MacArthur Park this summer — was called as a witness Wednesday in a federal misdemeanor assault case against Brayan Ramos-Brito, who was accused of striking a federal agent. Bovino, who flew in to testify from Chicago, the latest city targeted for an immigration enforcement surge, said he witnessed the alleged assault committed by Ramos-Brito in Paramount on June 7. Bovino was questioned

by the defense about previous comments he made referring to undocumented immigrants as “scum.” The jury came back with the acquittal after a little over an hour of deliberations. The case could prove to be an ominous bellwether for embattled acting U.S. Atty. Bill Essayli, who has struggled to win indictments against those charged with committing crimes while protesting aggressive immigration enforcement in Southern California. Prosecutors originally brought a felony charge against Ramos-Brito, which was reduced to a misdemeanor. During the two-day trial, a number of videos were displayed showing a Border Patrol agent shoving Ramos-Brito, but none clearly illustrated his alleged attack on the agent. Outfitted in his green Border Patrol uniform, Bovino was the lone Border Patrol agent to testify that he witnessed Ramos-Brito drag his arm back and strike an agent with an open palm in the chest. Ramos-Brito and his attorneys declined to comment. [See Trial, A14]

# State to roll out its own vaccine rules

California breaks from the CDC with new guidance after a wave of COVID cases.

By MELODY GUTIERREZ

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a law Wednesday giving California the power to set its own immunization schedules based on state health experts and independent medical groups — a sharp break from decades of reliance on guidance from the federal government. The move came the same day that California and its West Coast allies issued joint recommendations for COVID-19, flu and RSV vaccines, part of a regional alliance formed to counter what they say is a politicized U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Our states are united in putting science, safety, and transparency first — and in protecting families with clear, credible vaccine guidance,” said the governors of California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii, which make up the West Coast Health Alliance. The healthcare clash comes after a wave of COVID cases and as the annual flu season nears. For decades, the CDC has been the nation’s trusted authority on vaccines — setting childhood immunization schedules, guiding which shots adults should receive and shaping state health policies across the country. But at the direction of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a Trump ally, the CDC fired top leadership, lost senior scientific advisors and remade its vaccine advisory committee with members who the Associated Press found spread misinformation and conspiracy theories about immunizations. That committee, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, is set to meet Thursday and Friday to review — and potentially change — vaccine recommendations. Kennedy, a longtime vaccine skeptic, has defended

[See Vaccines, A7]

## Ousted CDC chief warns of dangers

“I believe preventable diseases will return,” Susan Monarez tells a Senate panel. **NATION, A6**

## Israel nearer to pariah status

Gaza assault has fueled genocide accusations and a global backlash, deepening the nation’s isolation. **WORLD, A4**

## Olympic tickets on sale in 2026

Beginning in January, fans may register for lottery to buy passes for 2028 L.A. Summer Games. **SPORTS, B10**

## Fed cuts key interest rate

Federal Reserve announces a quarter-point drop to 4.1% and expects two more cuts this year. **BUSINESS, A10**

## Weather

A couple of showers. L.A. Basin: 84/69. **B6**

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